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By TED LEWIS

Washington, Feb. 23—When President Johnson and Bobby Kennedy have a meeting of minds on any big controversial issue such as the Central Intelligence Agency, we have an event of some political importance. Particularly when Vice President Humphrey doesn't see eye to eye with either on the same hot issue.

This interesting development came today when LBJ finally, through a most deviously arranged process, came out in defense of the Central Intelligence Agency. His effort to boost the morale of the spy-boy outfit was along the lines of Bobby Kennedy's defense of the agency earlier this week.

LBJ and Bobby On Same Horse & Hubie's Afoot

at all happy about what the CIA has been doing."

Humphrey's sniping was even joined in by Health, Education and Welfare Secretary John Gardner, who considered the CIA's youth-organization infiltration methods a "mistake." Both Gardner and Humphrey should have kept their mouths shut, at least pending word on what the official White House line was on the CIA.

Gardner, as a member of the President's special CIA review board (along with CIA Director Richard Helms and Undersecretary of State Nicholas Katzenbach), should obviously have kept silent until all the facts were in hand by the investigatory group.

Humphrey should, for sound political reasons, have kept mum instead of verbose. He does want to run with LBJ again in 1968 and he should never box himself into a corner which gives Bobby an advantage on the Lyndon level.

This recital does not mean that Bobby and the President are finally like that, even if they totally agree on this one issue.

The chances are that the President did not like to be in the position of following Bobby in defense of the intelligence agency, especially when in hindsight it appeared that the White House should have defended the CIA emphatically in the beginning of disclosures of the money intrigue, instead of naming a board to study the situation.

But Johnson failed to take that positive strong personal stand. As a result, Bobby was able to speak out firmly and decisively, grab the chief defender role and the headlines.



Vice President Humphrey
Doesn't see eye to eye

Called It Unfair to Make CIA Take the Rap

As the New York Senator said last Tuesday, it was unfair to make the CIA take the rap for its undercover subsidizing operations. Especially as the policy decisions were not made by the CIA but at the highest levels of the Truman, Ike, Kennedy and Johnson Administrations.

This was just about what the President finally came around to saying today.

We were tipped shortly before the White House made known its Bobby-like views today that the President was going to "get back at Bobby." But any perusal of the developments which followed showed that the President was really "trying to catch up with Bobby."

The arrangement was a devious one, which fooled only the naïve. On Tuesday night, the White House said, at a reception in the mansion for members of Congress, LBJ asked Katzenbach for a "status report" on the Presidential panel's inquiry. That was what was supplied and made public today. It only pointed out what has been generally accepted—namely that the CIA in its youth organization financing activities has only been acting in accord with National Security Council policy decisions made in 1952 and 1954, and still in effect.

This Katzenbach document praised the CIA as composed of "many farsighted and courageous Americans" serving their country in perilous channels. Thus it supplied the President with a means of catching up with Bobby without, it was hoped, appearing to do just that.

Agrees With the Conclusions' and That's That

The President, it was explained, "agrees with the conclusions in this preliminary report" and that was that. He was thus on record finally. Previously he had totally sidestepped a firm position except that last Wednesday he ordered (the announcement was made through the State Department) the panel investigation of the CIA. And, also through a second party, assured the educational community that he favored preservation of its "integrity and independence."

In contrast, Bobby Kennedy has spoken for himself on this controversial subject right along. It may well be that there was evidence in the Kennedy Administration record that he was actively engaged in seeing that the infiltration policy was carried out properly by the CIA.

Nevertheless, he could have been less rather than more emphatic in championing the undercover operation.

There definitely has been no grass-roots political advantage gained by Bobby on this issue. On the contrary, he has hurt his image among the young voters to whom he has always most appealed, and whose support he has always striven for—even on a global basis.

But at least tonight he has the President on his side on the CIA issue. And Humphrey doesn't. This may not count much in the long run, but it is an entertaining if not too happy coalition while it lasts, which won't be for long.

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